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# Gentrification and Displacement: An Environmental Justice Challenge For Social Work in Urban Environments


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**Gentrification and Displacement: An Environmental Justice Challenge  
For Social Work in Urban Environments**

By

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Chapter in Rinkel, M., & Powers, M. C. F. (Eds.) (2017). *Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability: A Workbook for Global Social Workers and Educators*. International Federation of Social Workers.

**Overview:**

This chapter presents a lesson which includes a case study highlighting the social, economic, and environmental injustices associated with the gentrification of Northeast Portland, Oregon, US. The reader will then engage in an exercise, which includes reviewing the suggested video clip and news article segment highlighting experiences of families caught up in gentrification in Northeast Portland. Finally, the reader will work through the associated questions and activities to achieve the learning outcomes.

**Resources:**

**Floum, J. (January 24, 2017). Northeast Portland families face tough choice after new owner more than doubles their rent. *The Oregonian*.**

Olga Castillo and her 10-year-old daughter Evelyn Ku-Castillo cried when they got the news in December.

A letter from a property manager they didn't recognize told them their family's rent will more than double from \$600 per month to \$1,250 per month in April.

The Ku-Castillos fear they will have to move out of their northeast Portland apartment building, where they celebrate Christmas each year with their extended Mexican family. It's where Eric Ku comes home each weeknight at 11 p.m. after working two kitchen jobs to pay the rent and where pencil marks on a bedroom door document Ku-Castillo and her three younger siblings' growth over the past seven years.

"I'll be lonely if I move," Ku-Castillo told her mother. Her aunt and uncle live in the building. Her cousins live nearby. Most of her family and friends attend Rigler Elementary School.

The Ku-Castillos are among about 18 families and 26 Rigler Elementary School students who will be forced to find another place to live due to the rent increase at the Normandy Apartments on NE Killingsworth, according to interviews with families and advocacy groups and the notice letter obtained by *The Oregonian*/OregonLive.

Rent prices are set to increase April 1. As a result, many families will have to leave their homes before the school year ends, said Noelle Studer-Spevak, president of Rigler Elementary School's parent teacher association. The planned evictions were first reported by *Willamette Week*.

"Kids are struggling in school anyway," Studer-Spevak said. "When they have to leave and they get displaced, it sets them back."

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**Montgomery, S., & Webb, J. [Authors]. (2016, May 31). *Losing Alberta: Gentrification in Northeast Portland* [Video file]. Retrieved from:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSsDgiRrSOY>